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Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations, including special economic assistance: emergency international assistance for peace, normalcy and reconstruction of war-stricken Afghanistan

Emergency international assistance for peace, normalcy and reconstruction of war-stricken Afghanistan

Report of the Secretary-General**

Summary

The present report describes the continuing humanitarian challenges facing Afghanistan after a year in which political and military developments have dramatically changed the environment in which emergency assistance is being provided. The establishment of the Interim Authority in December 2001 and of the Transitional Administration in June 2002 has increasingly allowed the Afghan people to determine assistance priorities and to coordinate programming and delivery, in close cooperation with the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan and the programme groups that have been established for key sectors.

Significant achievements in the delivery of humanitarian and recovery assistance during the reporting period include the assisted return of more than 1 million refugees, the return to school of more than 3 million children and a 90 per cent increase in girls' enrolment, several country-wide immunization campaigns, and the effective and coordinated response to several natural disasters, including earthquakes, floods and a severe locust infestation.

The report also outlines the significant challenges that remain in view of an ongoing humanitarian crisis of severe proportions. High levels of socio-economic vulnerability, evidenced, for example, by widespread chronic malnutrition among children and a turn towards poppy production, are likely to persist for the coming 18 months. Key challenges in this context include the sustainable reintegration of returnees, an increased recovery focus of humanitarian assistance activities, and sustained donor support to address urgent needs as well as long-term recovery and reconstruction.

* A/57/150.

** The late submission of the report was due to developments in the situation in Afghanistan.

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I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to paragraph 23 of General Assembly resolution 56/220 B of 21 December 2001 in which the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit to it, at its fifty-seventh session, a report on actions taken pursuant to the resolution. The report covers developments during the period from 1 July 2001 to 30 June 2002.

2. The circumstances in which emergency assistance is being provided in Afghanistan changed dramatically during the reporting period. After the fall of the Taliban in November 2001, the Agreement on Provisional Arrangements in Afghanistan Pending the Re-establishment of Permanent Government Institutions (the Bonn Agreement) (see S/2001/1154) was signed on 5 December and the Interim Administration was sworn in on 22 December. Six months later, the Transitional Administration was established after the successful conclusion of the Emergency Loya Jirga held from 11 to 19 June 2002. On 28 March 2002, the Security Council, in its resolution 1401 (2002), had endorsed the establishment of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) with the mandate and integrated structure proposed by the Secretary-General in his report of 18 March 2002 to the Council (A/56/875-S/2002/278). The key political developments during the reporting period are described in more detail in other reports of the Secretary-General, including that of 11 July 2002 (A/56/1000-S/2002/737).

II. Review of major humanitarian developments

3. Despite increased international assistance, the establishment of a new Government, and improvements in security since late 2001, serious challenges remain. Overall socio-economic vulnerability, caused by prolonged war, drought and displacement, is likely to persist for the coming 18 months. In particular, drought has resulted in decreased agricultural production, loss of land and assets, livestock depletion and a rise in individual and family debt. These factors in turn have severely weakened household coping strategies and heightened food insecurity, resulting, among other things, in high rates of chronic malnutrition among children, the increasing use of child labour and a turn towards poppy production. In many parts of the country, challenges to household livelihoods are compounded by landmine/unexploded ordnance (UXO) contamination, as well as difficulties of access to both markets and basic services, particularly during the winter months.

4. The achievements of the last months are significant, however. Not only have refugee returns exceeded expectations, but this year's return to school has attracted over 3 million children. In addition, the United Nations has supported effective responses to locust infestation, flooding and earthquakes, and has assisted in the fight against maternal mortality, malaria and poliomyelitis, as well as in the rapid acceleration of mine surveying and clearance.

5. Nevertheless, humanitarian needs remain and require urgent action. Almost one third of the population is dependent on some form of emergency assistance. In the months to come, areas of socio-economic vulnerability will likely receive additional pressure from large numbers of returning refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs). Sustained donor support will be required to maintain momentum in lifting Afghans out of dependency and vulnerability.

III. Outlook for recovery and reconstruction

6. UNAMA and the international assistance community have worked closely with the Government of Afghanistan to facilitate its recovery strategy. In April 2002, the Interim Administration presented its National Development Framework laying out 12 programme areas. For several programme areas, programme groups have been organized, led by government ministries, with United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations as members. The programme groups are supported by programme secretariats, normally United Nations agencies,[1] appointed to help manage the programme groups, assist the Government in developing strong operational coordination mechanisms, provide technical support in the preparation of the national development budget and support national capacity-building efforts.

7. Impressive first steps have been taken to regenerate the disrupted socio-economic fabric of the country. However, recovery and reconstruction can be sustained only through Afghanistan's integration into the mainstream of legitimate regional economic activity, the provision of disincentives for the resurgence of violence and consistent donor support.

8. With the successful conclusion of the Loya Jirga, there is the prospect of 18 months of stable government. The Transitional Administration is committed to reducing bureaucracy, corruption and inefficiency. One element of the reform process is the introduction of two new banking laws governing the Central Bank and general banking supervision. The objective is a legislative framework that promotes financial sector stability, a prerequisite of investment. Private sector investment is recognized as being a key motor for Afghanistan's reconstruction and, while precise quantitative data are not yet available, there is evidence of increasingly serious investment interest from regional and international firms.

9. In January 2002, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) launched the Recovery and Employment Afghanistan Programme (REAP), which has created 16,000 jobs, primarily in labour-intensive public works projects. Beyond providing employment, REAP has injected US$ 1.8 million into neighbourhoods and villages largely untouched by economic opportunity. The programme has garnered sufficient donor support to expand from Kabul to other urban locations.

IV. Socio-economic developments

10. Prior to 11 September 2001, the Afghan economy, with the exception of the transit trade and military expenditure, had been severely distorted and constrained. Further disruption occurred during the coalition war against terrorism, with the south being particularly affected. There are now visible signs, however, of booming economic activity in Kabul, where the presence of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) inspires confidence in security, and to a lesser extent in other cities. There are newly flourishing markets in real estate, small and medium-sized enterprises, construction and telecommunications.

11. The major social change has been the re-emergence of women in urban areas. Girls have returned to schools in huge numbers and with high-profile support from the Government. In rural areas, especially in the more conservative tribal belt, the situation of women has not changed to any great extent since the removal of the Taliban.

12. There are visible changes in the role of civil society. In Kabul and other cities, the media are re-emerging, initiating the type of debate that had been impossible in recent years. Academic institutions are reopening, a Human Rights Commission has been formed, and lawyers' associations are once again in operation. Cultural activities, in the form of music, cinema, photography and family celebrations, are now openly practised.

13. Security Council sanctions and bilateral trade embargoes have been lifted, and commercial relations with neighbouring States are being restored. The national airline, Ariana, has commenced flying internationally since the lifting of the sanctions.

14. Following the Bonn Agreement, UNDP established, with donor contributions, the Afghan Interim Authority Fund (AIAF) to support the Interim Authority in discharging its important responsibilities during its six-month administration. The Fund provided for the payment of salaries to 200,000 civil servants between January and June 2002, the training of civil servants involved in payroll operations, emergency building repairs and transportation facilities for ministries, support for the establishment of the Special Independent Commission for the Convening of the Emergency Loya Jirga, and capacity development of the Ministry for Women's Affairs. The Fund ceased operation on 15 August.

15. On the basis of a needs assessment conducted by the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and UNDP in December 2001-January 2002, the International Conference on Reconstruction Assistance to Afghanistan, held in Tokyo on 21 and 22 January 2002, generated pledges for Afghanistan's reconstruction totalling US$ 1.8 billion for the first year and $4.5 billion over five years (see A/56/801-S/2002/134).

16. As agreed at the Tokyo Conference, a mechanism was established for coordinated international support to Afghanistan. This mechanism, known as the Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund (ARTF), is administered by the World Bank and jointly managed by ADB, the Islamic Development Bank (IDB), UNDP and the World Bank. ARTF supports the Government's recurrent budget; investment activities and programmes, including quick-impact recovery projects; and training programmes for Afghans in-country. The Fund has attracted pledges of $120 million and has dispersed $18.5 million to the Government's account to cover urgent recurring expenditures in July and August 2002. Recurrent expenditures relating to police activities are covered by the Law and Order Trust Fund established by UNDP in May 2002.

V. Assistance provided by the United Nations system and its partners

A. Coordination of relief, recovery and reconstruction

17. Substantial progress has been made in the planning and implementation of the relief, recovery and rehabilitation mandate of UNAMA, and in developing its relationship with the national authorities. Programme groups and secretariats in key sectors (see para. 6 above) have led to increasingly integrated planning and programming and have helped the national authorities establish ownership of

priorities and strategies. Successful collaboration within the United Nations system and with the Government resulted in a well-organized response to the March earthquake crisis and the locust infestation in the north, an efficient programme to meet the needs of a rapid and large-scale refugee return, an extremely successful "back to school" programme and a nationwide immunization programme. Also, the substantially expanded humanitarian and recovery work of the United Nations has helped provide a stable environment for the Emergency Loya Jirga and the wider political process.

18. UNAMA is putting considerable resources into supporting the National Development Budget process, and will assist the Government in bringing the needs of Afghanistan to the attention of the donors. The budget process, by highlighting needs and objectives, will also play an important role in increasing integration between the programming of United Nations agencies, their partners and the Government.

19. A process of decentralizing responsibility for area development programming to area offices and provinces has also begun, so that the United Nations and other partners can work together rapidly and flexibly to design and implement appropriate programmes in each geographical area. These programmes will make use of limited resources to catalyse integrated development in areas of the country most affected by war, the return of refugees and IDPs, and drought.

20. In the second half of 2002, UNAMA will agree on a transition strategy with the Government, including measures to build the Government's capacity for the provision of basic social services, to develop subnational operations and to enhance the efficiency and integration of United Nations activities.

B. Institutional governance and capacity-building

21. The most important component of the governance agenda during the second half of the reporting period was the Loya Jirga process, which commenced with the establishment of the Loya Jirga Commission in January and culminated in June with the successful conclusion of the Emergency Loya Jirga.

22. The period under review saw the gradual re-establishment of government institutions at both the national and local levels. The foundation for the Civil Service Commission has been laid and the Judicial Commission was established in May 2002. The Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, in collaboration with the donor community, is developing a programme of support for the Judicial Commission.

23 With inputs provided by a variety of needs assessments, the Afghan Government is elaborating a National Development Framework including a national development budget and recurrent cost budget. UNDP has provided technical personnel to assist the administration in developing the budget and in establishing a database to track and monitor aid flows.

24. One of the most critical conditions for the emergence of a dynamic national economy and for Afghanistan's re-engagement with the regional and global economy is the re-establishment of an effective banking system. UNDP is helping the Central Bank of Afghanistan to upgrade its information technology capacity and to re-establish an effective operational presence across the country.

C. Food aid and food security

25. Civil unrest and a three-year drought had caused food insecurity in Afghanistan to reach crisis proportions by mid-2001. The events of 11 September exacerbated the situation, leading to an increased number of IDPs, destruction of livelihoods and high levels of malnutrition. By December 2001, the World Food Programme (WFP) was providing food aid for some 6 million Afghans, except where security conditions precluded this assistance.

26. WFP has conducted 58 rapid assessment missions in rural Afghanistan. Findings highlight persistent malnutrition, indicating a pressing need for food aid in the pre-harvest hunger period. Large-scale food security programming is needed over the long term to reduce the scale of the problem next year and to address severe vulnerability in general. In the meantime, the sale of household assets continues, more children are being pushed into the labour market to support their families, and early marriages are reported to be commonplace.

27. Overall food pipeline shortages are still a significant issue, forcing a scaling back of ration sizes and reducing the ability of WFP to meet urgent needs. The joint WFP-Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) crop and food supply assessment for 2002-2003 is currently being finalized and will provide valuable information on food security after the harvest and food aid requirements for vulnerable communities. Initial results indicate a marked increase in agricultural output in most areas due to higher rainfall earlier this year; however, preliminary indications signal that drought may continue in the southern, eastern and Hazarajat areas.

28. Current food aid initiatives include Food for Asset Creation, Food for Work, Food for Seed and Food for Education. In addition there are projects such as Women's and Men's Bakeries for the Urban Vulnerable; supplementary feeding for the severely ill or malnourished; support to IDPs; and repatriation assistance to 1.5 million refugees. Also, civil servant salaries are being supplemented with food rations to help develop a sound civil service administration. United Nations agencies are working with the Government of Afghanistan to establish a national database on food security that will generate early warning signals and support policy formulation and advocacy.

29. Beyond the current operation, a protracted relief and recovery operation is envisioned, in which WFP will continue to address immediate food shortages and chronic malnutrition while contributing to the building of fundamental systems in agriculture, education, health, welfare, urban infrastructure and employment. Particular attention will be directed towards those activities that increase self-sufficiency and generate assets.

D. Health and nutrition

30. Early in 2002, a national health-sector planning workshop organized by the Ministry of Public Health, with support from the United Nations, identified five national health priorities: control of infectious diseases; maternal health; malnutrition; mental health; and war injuries.

31. To upgrade the capacity of the Ministry of Public Health, senior technical advisers in the areas of safe motherhood, the expanded programme of immunization (EPI) and nutrition have been placed within the ministry through United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) support. Basic health and emergency health kits have been distributed around Afghanistan to cover the needs of 7.1 million people. Other interventions include the development of mental health services and the rebuilding of infrastructure for maternal and child health care.

32. Afghanistan has made tremendous efforts to eradicate polio despite the crisis that erupted in the last quarter of 2001, when 11 cases were virologically confirmed. During the National Polio Immunization Days that took place in April and May more than 6 million children were vaccinated. The Ministry of Public Health, WHO and UNICEF are currently preparing for the subnational immunization campaign targeting the districts bordering Pakistan, where many polio cases were identified last year. In addition, 9 million children are covered by the current measles immunization campaign and vitamin A supplements have been provided for 4.5 million children.

33. Poverty, together with malnutrition, high fertility rates and low coverage of family planning services, has contributed to the very high maternal mortality rate and the general poor health status of women. To address these issues, the Ministry of Public Health formed a national maternal and child health task force. A pilot project for maternal death reporting has been set up in seven major hospitals. To improve the emergency obstetric care services and to ensure quality training for health professionals, four major hospitals in the country are being upgraded to function as "centres of excellence". For the first time in several years, a workshop on safe motherhood was convened in April-May 2002.

34. Nutrition assessments undertaken in 2001 and 2002 showed high levels of chronic malnutrition and micronutrient deficiencies, especially in drought-affected areas. UNICEF, WFP and non-governmental organizations are supporting supplementary and therapeutic feeding programmes for more than 300,000 children. With the support of Tufts University, a Nutrition Unit has been established in the Ministry of Public Health and a Senior Nutrition Adviser has been appointed.

E. Water and sanitation

35. The Water and Sanitation Programme Group for Afghanistan, with the active participation of three government ministries, has been coordinating the efforts of agencies working in the sector and has produced widely accepted guidelines for the implementation of water, sanitation and hygiene projects. During the reporting period, workshops were held on "Drinking water supply systems in Afghanistan" and "Water resources management and development".

36. The prolonged drought in Afghanistan has had a devastating effect on the underground water resources in 13 provinces. A coordinated effort is under way to develop new water sources and deepen dried-up wells for the affected population. The provision of adequate water and sanitation is also one of the main preconditions of the temporary accommodation of IDPs and the reintegration of returnees. During the reporting period, wells, hand pumps and latrines, as well as hygiene education, have been provided for over 500,000 people. In addition, UNICEF has constructed

water and sanitation facilities at 107 schools throughout the country and rehabilitated water and sanitation facilities in three high schools.

F. Education

37. More than two decades of turmoil have prevented Afghan children from realizing their right to education, and Afghanistan from attaining the basic levels of social and economic development that come with education. Very few girls were able to access post-primary opportunities over the past six years owing to the ban on girls' education. Inadequate learning materials, limited teacher capacity, and poor physical facilities also contributed to the low quality of education.

38. The Ministry of Education, with the support of UNICEF, non-governmental organizations and other stakeholders, launched the back-to-school campaign to help 1.78 million children return to school by 23 March 2002, the beginning of the new school year. As part of the campaign, basic supplies as well as teaching and learning materials were distributed to 4,500 schools for 2.3 million students and 30,000 teachers. Some 6,000 tents were provided as temporary classrooms. More than 8 million textbooks supplied by the University of Nebraska, Omaha, were distributed along with 1.8 million supplementary teaching materials. In addition, 40,000 teachers were trained in the use of this new material.

39. Data collected in over 6,500 learning spaces show that nearly 3 million children are now enrolled in school. Girls make up 30 per cent of the total student population and girls' enrolment has increased nearly 90 per cent since March 2002. Women represent 28 per cent of the teaching body.

40. In March 2002, the Afghan Interim Authority and UNAMA entrusted UNICEF with supporting the Ministry of Education in the reconstruction of the educational system in Afghanistan. The programme secretariat for education has created a forum for all partners within which to address policy issues in line with the priorities outlined in the National Development Framework, with the overall goal of guaranteeing that all Afghans have equitable access to quality education and learning opportunities. During the next year, the programme secretariat will provide support to the Ministry of Education in educational reform, infrastructure development and capacity development in particular.

41. Thousands of students were able to sit for university entrance examinations on 6 February 2002 through United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) support, thus enabling the higher education sector in Afghanistan to start functioning again.

42. The Ariana Women's Vocational Centre was completely refurbished and supplied with training equipment such as sewing machines, satellite televisions and computers. This has enabled hundreds of students to enrol in the centre for vocational and English language training.

G. Voluntary repatriation and reintegration

43. In close collaboration with government counterparts and United Nations and non-governmental organization partners, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) began preparations in March 2002 for a

multi-year voluntary repatriation effort to help end the decades-long exile of millions of Afghans. Tripartite agreements with the main countries of asylum were drawn up to provide a legal framework for the voluntary, dignified, safe and orderly return of Afghan refugees to Afghanistan, while ensuring that the right to asylum is respected for those who choose not to return to Afghanistan at this time. On 3 April 2002, the tripartite agreement between the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Interim Authority of Afghanistan and UNHCR was signed in Geneva. The tripartite agreement with the Government of Pakistan is under negotiation.

44. In preparation for the facilitated return, voluntary repatriation centres and mobile teams were established in Pakistan, the Islamic Republic of Iran and other neighbouring countries, as well as over 20 distribution centres across Afghanistan. Through this set-up, returnees receive travel assistance and a travel package consisting of food and non-food items. Information about conditions in areas of return is also constantly updated and disseminated to help refugees make informed choices concerning their return.

45. The number of facilitated returns under this operation has surpassed all expectations. By the end of June 2002, more than 1 million refugees had been assisted in returning to Afghanistan from Pakistan, the Islamic Republic of Iran and other neighbouring countries. This pace of return prompted UNHCR to increase its planning figure for 2002 from 850,000 to 1,630,000. The scale of return, however, while indicating a vote of confidence in Afghanistan, poses an equally large challenge to the process of reintegration.

46. UNHCR together with its partners has adopted a two-pronged approach to finding solutions for IDPs in camps. Those who register to return are provided with transport assistance. Those who do not wish to return for reasons of physical or food insecurity are assisted in place. By June 2002, a number of camps had been closed down or reduced in size owing to the return of over half a million people to their places of origin. Nevertheless, internal displacement remains an extensive phenomenon, particularly in the south where large numbers of Pashtun ethnic minorities from the north and drought-affected nomads are unable to return to their places of origin. Humanitarian assistance will be required for these groups for at least another year.

47. Refugees and displaced persons who have returned to their places of origin need to be provided with reintegration assistance in order to ensure that their return is sustainable. UNHCR will provide a limited amount of reintegration assistance in the shelter and water sectors in a way that is consistent with and complementary to the efforts of development actors, as specified in the National Development Framework.

48. These repatriation and reintegration activities will continue through 2003, when an estimated 1.2 million returnees and 300,000 internally displaced are expected to receive assistance. National capacity-building activities carried out during 2002 will enable the Ministry of Repatriation to assume increasing responsibilities in this domain.

H. Mine action

49. Afghanistan remains one of the most heavily mined countries in the world, with an estimated 10 million mines scattered across the country. Between 5 and 10 people, many of them children, are wounded in mine blasts daily. In many cases, these mines create an obstacle to economic recovery and development.

50. In consultation with the Government and donors, the United Nations Mine Action Centre for Afghanistan (MACA) has drawn up a plan for making Afghanistan mine-safe in the medium term. In addition, discussions are under way for a comprehensive strategy for the destruction of mine stockpiles. By the end of 2002, it is expected that over 98 million square metres of mine- and UXO-contaminated areas will be cleared; 30 million square metres of suspected mine-contaminated areas will be surveyed and marked; 50 million square metres of battle area will be marked; and 92 million square metres of surveyed area will be returned to the community for productive use.

51. There are five regional mine action centres in operation and three subregional offices are being established to synchronize with the eight UNAMA Area Coordination Offices. Except for conflict areas, clearance activities are in full operation, with the clearance of Bomb Live Unit (BLU) 97 cluster munitions designated as a high priority.

52. An Information Management System for Mine Action is being established to ensure improved collection, collation and analysis of mine-related information. Capacity-building in terms of human resources and equipment is ongoing at both the national and regional levels.

53. The United Nations has helped non-governmental organizations to carry out mine awareness programmes, especially as part of the back to school campaign and the current return process. Other initiatives for raising mine awareness include the deployment of 70 mine risk reduction trainers, with another 30 to be deployed by the end of 2002, and the provision of mine safety training to the staff of UNAMA and the Afghan Administration.

54. An international conference entitled "Building a Peaceful Future for Afghanistan: A Total Ban on Landmines" was held in Kabul in April-May 2002 as a lead-in to Afghanistan's becoming the 144th nation to sign the 1999 Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and Their Destruction.[2]

55. More than 4,400 personnel have been trained to deal effectively with sub-munitions dropped by the Coalition Forces. The staff of the Mine Action Programme for Afghanistan, a non-governmental organization closely allied with MACA, continues to receive technical and managerial training courses. Participation in the management-level courses has been expanded to include personnel from the national Department of Mine Clearance, in which a mine risk reduction cell is being established with UNICEF assistance.

I. Agriculture

56. Farming and related activities are the only means of livelihood for some 85 per cent of the population. Most farmers in Afghanistan engage in subsistence

agriculture; the years of drought and war have severely hampered the development of the commercial crop sector. Despite good rains and snowfall in some parts of the country, the production of wheat — the country's staple food — has been seriously jeopardized by the shortage of agricultural inputs. However, Afghanistan holds the distinction of being the only nation in the world to emerge from a complex and prolonged emergency with a significant stock of quality seed. This is because of the long-running seed improvement and multiplication programme that FAO has been managing with the Afghan Improved Seed Enterprise.

57. A US$ 3.5 million emergency distribution of wheat seeds, fertilizer and agricultural kits for at least 100,000 farm families is under way, focusing on IDPs and returnees. Seeds and tools for this distribution will be procured from local farmers and artisans, providing them with income while ensuring that the crop is adapted to local environmental conditions and agricultural systems.

58. A Code of Conduct governing seed production, distribution and importation in emergency situations in Afghanistan is awaiting ratification by the new Administration. The Code of Conduct supports the local agricultural market and genetic resources while ensuring that short-term measures aimed at alleviating immediate post-war food insecurity do not jeopardize the long-term capacity of Afghan farmers to achieve food self-sufficiency and establish export markets.

59. In the past, exports of nuts, dried fruits and agricultural by-products provided Afghanistan with 48 per cent of its export revenue. FAO will conduct a comprehensive survey of the country's commercial fruit and nut industry in order to help the Government draw up strategies for the development of this important sector.

60. In the 1970s, livestock products made up a significant part of national income and export revenues. Livestock continue to be important economic assets for the people, providing essential nutrients and a vital source of food security for most households. Unlike some of its neighbours, Afghanistan is entirely free of rinderpest, largely owing to the dynamic network of 255 veterinary field units established by the Ministry of Agriculture in partnership with FAO. Under this initiative, for the past two decades, millions of animals have been vaccinated and monitored each year. A national livestock census, including a survey of migratory Kuchi communities, will be undertaken in 2002.

61. FAO is embarking on a programme to rehabilitate community-based irrigation schemes, monitor existing irrigation structures and collect data on irrigation problems. FAO is also working with the Ministries of Agriculture and Irrigation to increase their institutional capacity in the regions.

62. In March 2002, FAO launched a US$ 1 million campaign to combat the worst locust plague to have hit Afghanistan in 30 years. In spite of the logistic and security constraints, prompt action by the provincial authorities, non-governmental organizations and United Nations agencies had cleared nearly 240,000 hectares by mid-June.

J. Urban rehabilitation

63. The recent crises and continuing drought have resulted in the mass exodus of people from their villages to nearby cities and neighbouring countries. A number of

settlements grew overnight near major cities, some of them holding up to 250,000 people. In addition, as described above, the political developments since December 2001 have led to a massive return of refugees and exiles to the country. Large proportions are settling in urban areas.

64. In December, the United Nations, ADB and the World Bank undertook a comprehensive needs assessment which indicated that approximately US$ 365 million would be required over 10 years for urban reconstruction. During the reporting period, the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) and UNDP provided assistance for community development, public works and water/sanitation projects benefiting more than 4 million people in five principal cities, and WFP played a critical role in meeting the acute food shortage in urban areas.

K. Human rights and gender

65. Following the Bonn Agreement, a three-month Afghan-led and United Nations-supported process of consultations was held leading to the development of a national roster of the Afghan human rights community and the convening of a series of workshops on human rights. A two-year programme of work was elaborated in four main areas: establishment of an independent human rights commission and the building of its capacities; advancement of human rights of women; human rights education; and transitional justice.

66. On 6 June 2002, President Karzai signed a decree establishing the Afghan Independent Commission on Human Rights, whose responsibilities include human rights monitoring, investigation of violations of human rights and development of domestic human rights institutions. UNAMA and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights are helping the Commission develop its capacities, expand its outreach and assert itself as the main national institution in the area of human rights.

67. Notwithstanding decisive improvements in the period of this report, the situation of human rights remains complex, particularly with regard to three areas. First, inter-factional conflict, combined with ethnic violence and discrimination, has persisted. Second, a pattern of political intimidation has developed, first centring around the process of the Emergency Loya Jirga and more recently targeting civil society organizations that try to be independent from certain local authorities. Third, some quarters of Afghan society have resisted the process of women's emancipation that started after the fall of the Taliban regime, in some cases directing threats and intimidation against women based on their political or social activities.

68. UNAMA set up a system of human rights monitoring and investigation of cases. This task, mandated by the Security Council, is being undertaken in cooperation with local actors, including the Independent Commission on Human Rights.

69. Increased economic vulnerability has placed children at high risk as destitute parents send their children into the streets or factories, or out to join the fighting forces in search of income, or place them in orphanages in the hope that they will be provided for. There is evidence that girls are given away for marriage at much younger ages than are customary, as dowries have become the last resort for many

families wishing to escape further indebtedness. In addition to lacking access to health and education services, children have to cope with psychosocial distress as a result of the loss of family and friends, the experience of violence, increased family poverty and the daily challenges of surviving in a war-ravaged environment. Discrimination against girls and minority and returnee children is a major concern.

70. UNICEF is working in support of the Ministries of Justice, Social Affairs and Labour and Women's Affairs on child protection policy, juvenile justice and social protection of vulnerable groups. A joint Ministry of Justice and UNICEF rapid assessment on the situation of children in conflict with the law and deprived of their liberty has been completed, and follow-up action to rehabilitate the juvenile justice system and to build the capacity of legal professionals is in progress. A national survey of vulnerable children is currently being carried out.

71. Women and girls have endured extreme mental, social and economic hardships as a result of severe restrictions imposed by the Taliban on their participation in public life, barring them from access to education and employment. While the recent changes in the political situation have opened up opportunities to promote the rights of women and girls, they continue to be largely marginalized. Violence against women and girls, mostly unreported, continues at an alarming rate.

72. A United Nations inter-agency network for gender equality has been created to provide the framework for a gender-sensitive approach to policies and programmes and for effective coordination and monitoring within the United Nations system.

73. On 26 July, a new capacity-building agreement was signed in New York between the Ministry of Women's Affairs and the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM). Under the new agreement, UNIFEM will work with the Ministry to correct long-standing gender discrimination in Afghanistan. The agreement formally initiates a commitment to enable Afghan women of all skills and professions to participate substantially in the reconstruction of their country. UNIFEM will mobilize funds to strengthen the Ministry's outreach, delivery of services and capacity to build constituencies among women, women's groups and non-governmental organizations in Afghanistan's provinces.

L. Drug control

74. A survey conducted by the Office for Drug Control and Crime Prevention (ODCCP) in southern and eastern Afghanistan in February 2002 confirmed a major resurgence in opium poppy cultivation. The Government has issued decrees concerning drug control and has introduced poppy cultivation eradication campaigns in key areas. As a result of these interventions, the Government estimates that poppy cultivation in the eastern and southern regions has dropped by 25 per cent.

75. Augmenting the eradication campaign, ODCCP coordinates with government departments, donors, United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations to create awareness about drug-related issues. ODCCP also provides support for developing appropriate interventions and programmes that will create alternative livelihood options and help to reduce production and consumption of opium. The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland is taking the lead in coordinating international efforts towards assisting Afghanistan in the fight against

drugs, and has prepared a strategic action plan which gives due recognition to the role and expertise of ODCCP.

76. ODCCP has conducted a comprehensive countrywide study that will include a strategy for the elimination of opium poppy cultivation at the farm-gate level. Also under preparation is a plan of action for addressing the essential needs of farmers for the forthcoming planting season, with the objective of providing feasible alternatives to poppy cultivation.

M. Environment

77. Mismanagement and destruction of natural resources have accelerated in recent years, resulting in the almost complete disappearance of forests in many parts of Afghanistan and threatening the existence of many endangered species. Since 1979, it is estimated that Afghanistan has lost up to 30 per cent of its forests owing to household energy consumption and illegal commerce in timber. The three-year drought has affected the country's soil and water resources, seriously threatening agricultural productivity. Groundwater resources are being used at unsustainable rates. Naturally arid, Afghanistan is particularly sensitive to environmental mismanagement, and a large part of its land base is affected by erosion.

78. The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) has embarked on a strategic assessment of environmental conditions, on the basis of which projects will be introduced to rehabilitate and manage the natural resources of Afghanistan on a sustainable basis. An institutional assessment of the newly formed Ministry of Irrigation and Environment will be conducted to develop capacity-building initiatives in the field of environment management.

79. As nearly all laboratory facilities have been destroyed and data collection and monitoring are inadequate and fragmentary, UNEP will provide support for collecting baseline data through remote sensing techniques and field sampling. United Nations agencies and the United States Agency for International Development have formed a coordination group on remote sensing to ensure cost-efficient use of satellite imagery and analysis.

N. Demobilization, disarmament and reintegration

80. The demobilization, disarmament and reintegration process is intrinsically related both to efforts aimed at replacing existing militias with a single national army and police force and to the existing realities of shortages, vulnerability and slow economic growth in Afghanistan. Coping and survival strategies of rural communities and, to a lesser extent, those of urban areas have been severely eroded, often resulting in competition for resources and in some cases leading to outright social conflict. The traditional seasonal migration to Pakistan and the Islamic Republic of Iran for casual labour has been curtailed because of stricter border restrictions on population movements, with major implications in terms of loss of remittances. The situation is exacerbated by return of IDPs and refugees.

81. In order to address these complex concerns, the Afghan Administration and UNAMA are developing a pilot project — the Afghan Demobilization, Disarmament and Reintegration Programme (ADDRP) — which aims to reach 20,000 ex-

combatants and former soldiers. The project will establish and support a national commission on demobilization, disarmament and reintegration and a secretariat. A national commissioner will head the secretariat and, within a year, assume management of ADDRP. A United Nations technical team is supporting the Government in the development of a special demobilization and reintegration plan for child soldiers and other war-affected children.

82. The demobilization and reintegration process will offer alternative employment to former combatants, mainly in the rehabilitation of infrastructure and in mine action. Longer-term income opportunities will be generated through microcredit schemes and vocational and professional training. Where possible, communities will be given support to ensure that the return of combatants does not create undue pressure and competition for resources.

O. Culture and media

83. Cultural and media capacity-building is being addressed through various avenues. UNESCO is supporting the independent printed press and the Voice of Afghan Women in Global Media, an association of more than 60 women journalists. In addition, a specialized publishing unit, Aina Media Resource Centre, was provided with equipment and training to improve the standard of women's newspapers and magazines.

84. The Ministry of Information and Culture was supplied with vehicles and equipment, including an Internet connection. UNESCO also provided 160 hours of high-quality television programmes from its global CreaTV network of public service broadcasters free of charge to Radio-Television Afghanistan.

VI. Assistance provided by Member States

85. Donor funding for Afghanistan has followed an uneven pattern since the launching of the United Nations Donor Alert in October 2001. As of mid-June, funding made available for humanitarian and recovery activities through the United Nations Immediate and Transitional Assistance Programme for the Afghan People (ITAP) amounted to some $865 million, an impressive achievement by any standard of resource mobilization. In addition, funds donated through bilateral channels amounted to just over $192 million, while $72.5 million had been contributed to the Afghan Interim Authority Fund to support public service salaries, the Loya Jirga and the establishment of the Independent Commission on Human Rights.

86. However, a closer look reveals that resource flows for humanitarian and recovery activities have slowed dramatically in recent months. Between 15 April and 6 June 2002, little more than $15 million was made available, despite clear evidence of persistently high levels of food insecurity and socio-economic vulnerability. This slowdown in donor disbursements has caused potentially serious disruptions to programmes seeking to meet the most urgent needs around the country. WFP has been obliged to consider reducing its coverage of beneficiaries for food distribution, and to scale down recovery-oriented schemes such as food for work and school feeding. Likewise, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) in May 2002 abruptly announced the interruption of its internal transport

programme supporting the return of refugees and IDPs, owing to a reported lack of funding. UNHCR was obliged to cover partially for this gap, while at the same time addressing the issue of an unexpectedly high rate of repatriation from neighbouring countries.

VII. Observations

87. **The last eight months have been momentous for Afghanistan, with the signing of the Bonn Agreement, the establishment of the Afghan Interim Authority, the successful completion of the Loya Jirga and the swearing in of the new Afghanistan Transitional Administration. As stated in the Bonn Agreement, the United Nations has been tasked to work with the Afghan Transitional Administration to bring about "national reconciliation, lasting peace, stability and respect for human rights in the country" (first preambular para.) in addition to carrying out its role in mitigating human suffering. As part of this mandate, UNAMA seeks to coordinate international assistance efforts in support of the transition to peace.**

88. **Afghanistan continues to face serious humanitarian challenges. Given the complex interaction among drought, food insecurity and poppy cultivation, assistance partners must act urgently to strengthen livelihood opportunities in vulnerable areas while supporting the reintegration of returning populations into host communities. This will require a better analysis of vulnerability in targeted areas. It will require the ongoing provision of humanitarian assistance that addresses the immediate needs of vulnerable communities while also facilitating their recovery over the longer term. Sustainable reintegration must be based on an integrated approach involving coordinated food security and cash-for-work strategies together with support for the key areas of water, health and education.**

89. **The precarious situation in Afghanistan suggests two particularly important priorities for Member States to consider. The first is to ensure that the winter response plan currently being drawn up by United Nations agencies and the Government is well resourced. Millions of people face considerable hardship over this winter, and urgently require assistance. The second priority stems from the fact that the Government itself needs financing to meet its own core costs, and to support the needs of its own people. A substantial budget deficit is projected which will lead to cuts in the services that the Government hopes to provide. It should be recalled that the development of a strong central Government is a key theme of the Bonn Agreement. Member States are strongly encouraged to provide support to the Government through the Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund.**

90. **The Afghan Government has clearly signalled its intention to take the lead in the reconstruction of Afghanistan. However, it cannot accomplish this task alone and requires sustained assistance from the international community. I would therefore appeal to the donor community to reaffirm its commitment to support Afghanistan through the full range of needs extending from humanitarian assistance to development aid.**

Notes

[1] Programme secretariats approved are: the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) for education, the World Health Organization (WHO) for health, the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) for urban development, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) for natural resources, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) for return and reintegration, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) for culture and media, the United Nations Mine Action Centre for Afghanistan (MACA) for the mine action subgroup and the World Food Programme (WFP) for food and subgroup.

[2] See CD/1478.